

## Geoteaming a hit at Greenway Days in North Bend

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By Emily Lee



Alley Matarangas, 4, listens to instructions as she learns how to use the GPS device.  
Photo by Emily Lee

Amid Saturday's sizzling temperatures, more than 120 participants gathered at North Bend's Rattlesnake Lake to partake in geoteaming competitions hosted by Greenway Days. Geoteaming, a sport rooted in geocaching, is an adventure game in which

participants search for hidden caches using GPS devices, pocket PCs and maps provided by Playtime Inc.

“This is a high-tech treasure hunt,” said Donna Lowe, facilitator of geoteaming, in opening remarks. “Your mission is to hunt and find using equipment.”

Participants, ranging from toddlers to grandparents, joined into teams of eight and had an hour to seek out as many of the 21 hidden caches as they could. The caches were plastic containers hidden on trees, between plants and even disguised as rocks. Most families came to the event as first-time geocachers eager to learn how to navigate using GPS devices.

“I think it’s fun to be outside and it’s great that they make an adventure out of it,” said Angela Craig, a first-time participant. “It’s a great way to teach people how to use (GPS), especially for the kids in emergency situations.”

Greenway Days is an annual two-day festival held by the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, which encourages locals to explore the 1.4 million acre scenic and recreation corridor along I-90.

“This festival is to stimulate awareness around the area about ... recreational activities that are available for the Puget Sound residents,” said Kelly Cundiff, coordinator of Greenway Days.

Geoteaming allowed groups to fuse exploration with technology in a teamwork adventure. At the end of each session, raffle winners and the team who found the most caches were awarded with mid-day ski passes and wall-climbing vouchers.

“I had a good time,” said Alley Matarangas, a four-year old participant who found one of the caches on a tree.

Since its introduction eight years ago, geocaching has exploded into a trend and hobby by adventure-seeking people all around the world.

In May 2000, Bill Clinton signed a bill that unscrambled satellite information, thereby, opening up opportunities for the public to use GPS devices. The first cache was hidden the same year and now over 600,000 caches are hidden worldwide, according to geocaching.com.

“It’s a combination of somewhere to go and something to search for,” said Steve Day , participant in the event.

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